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## Stearns helps Air Force, military, win

by Katherine Gleason, AFRL Public Affairs



**Laura Stearns**

WRIGHT-PATTERSON AIR FORCE BASE, Ohio — When 2nd Lt. Laura Stearns learned she had been selected to try out for the Air Force women's soccer team, her goals were to make the team, meet new people, and have the opportunity to travel to different military installations. Little did she realize she would be returning home with two gold medals.

Stearns, an acquisition manager for the Air Force Research Laboratory's Materials and Manufacturing Directorate, first helped the Air Force team win its second consecutive All-Armed Forces Championship. During the tournament, held May 8-15 at Fort Eustis, Va., the Air Force team outscored its opponents 28-3, completely shutting out both the Navy and Marine Corps squads.

The final game matched Air Force against Army. Army had won 2-1 in their first meeting, and scored quickly in the second game to take a 1-0 lead. However, the Air Force team rallied and emerged with a 4-1 victory. Although both the Air Force and Army teams finished the tournament with 5-1 records, the Air Force team was named champions based on goal differential in head-to-head match-ups.

Following the All-Armed Forces Tournament, Stearns learned that she had been selected to represent the United States in the first Conseil International du Sport Militaire (CISM) World Military Women's Soccer Championships, in Kingston, Ontario, Canada. The U.S. team was comprised of seven Air Force players, six Army, three Navy, and one player each from the Coast Guard and the Marines.

"After the CISM team was selected, we had to go from being competitors to being teammates," said Stearns. "After only four days of training together, we left for Canada. We left at 2:30 in the morning for the airport, arrived in Toronto, and then drove three hours to Kingston."

The U.S. team faced Germany, Holland, and Canada in the CISM tournament. In the first round of play, the U.S. defeated each team, and advanced to the semi-finals as the first seed. They defeated Canada 4-0, and advanced to the championship game, where they defeated Germany 5-0.

"We were there [Kingston] almost two weeks, and obviously had a very successful trip. We all made a lot of friends and learned about each other's services. I met so many people and would love to participate again next year when the Navy hosts the tournament as well as Germany for the follow-up tournament," said Stearns.

Stearns also commented that winning made the trip especially memorable. "Every one says just go out there and have fun, but for me winning is what is fun," she said. "I'd have to say that besides all the wonderful people I met, coming back with two gold medals really was my favorite part. It was just so awesome to play soccer again, and especially at that level, representing both the Air Force and the U.S." @